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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000430

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2014

TAGS: [BA](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAINIS ALSO SURPRISED BY ARAB LEAGUE SUMMIT
DELAY, WONDER ABOUT G-8 INVITE

REF: A. MANAMA 291

[1](#)B. AMMAN 2360

[1](#)C. CAIRO 2433

Classified By: DCM Robert Ford, reason 1.5 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request, see para 5.

[1](#)2. (C) Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak told the Ambassador on March 29 that the sudden postponement of the Arab League summit was a surprise to him and the other ministers meeting in Tunisia. Describing details very much along the lines of refs b and c, the Bahraini noted that the Tunisian decision was especially surprising because the Arab ministers had not reached a quote deadlock unquote. Rather, the Bahraini minister said, the assembled Arab ministers thought they were making progress which made the Tunisian decision all the harder to understand.

[1](#)3. (S) Bahrain's King Hamad expressed puzzlement to the Ambassador on March 28 about the Arab League summit postponement. He commented that the Tunisians had made the decision without consulting, leaving the Bahrainis and other Arabs mystified. Tunisian President ben Ali's refusal to see the Arab foreign ministers who already were in Tunisia was impolite, he noted, and not in keeping with the tradition of Arab hospitality. (Comment: the King, in very good spirits, also noted that he personally finds the Tunisian President quiet to the point of off-putting. He remarked that ben Ali never greets Hamad when the two sit next to each other at summits. End Comment.)

[1](#)4. (C) The Bahraini Foreign Minister also regretted that the manner in which the Tunisians announced the postponement had needlessly caused a public image of Arab disarray. Earlier in March several Arab government including the Egyptians, Saudis and Bahrainis had recommended delaying the summit, especially after the Sheikh Yassin assassination. The Tunisians held firm to the date only to cancel now at the last moment. Sheikh Mohammed noted that the Tunisian decision itself need not be crippling. The Arab League charter states that summits can be held in a host nation or at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. The Bahraini King is going to see Mubarak in Egypt on March 29 and the Bahrainis presume the summit will be held relatively soon in Cairo.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment and Action Request: The King remains anxious to help the U.S. Middle East reform initiative, per ref a. He and the Foreign Minister both asked whether some Arab states would be invited to the G-8 summit in June. Ambassador said he had heard nothing specific and promised to seek guidance from Washington which he could pass to the King.

NEUMANN